

Random drug test policy reviewed

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Revisions proposed by Holyoke School District's random drug testing (RDT) policy committee will be on the school board's March calendar for first reading, with the changes to take effect for the 2010-11 school year.

Supt. Bret Miles reviewed the proposed changes at the board's Jan. 19 meeting.

It was a consensus of the board to make the effective date at the start of another year. Board president Dan Kafka emphasized the draft policy is now available for public review.

Board members first heard the RDT proposed changes at its Dec. 15 meeting. Reviewing that report, Miles emphasized the purpose of RDT is as a deterrent, not to have a fail-safe method to catch everyone.

Initial suggestions for change had to do with the program audit which was completed last fall. They related to frequency of tests, types of tests, standard operating procedures, etc. New language includes "within budget constraints."

A major change in the RDT draft policy notes a lesser consequence for a first positive test. A student will still be required to provide a clean or lower-level test, to go through the intake process with Centennial Mental Health (CMH) and follow the activities/athletic handbook consequences after a first positive test. However, there will be no requirement for monthly follow-up tests for that first offense.

Proposed changes also include stipulation for no instant results, with all tests to be sent to the lab. Records will be retained for a period of seven years and refusal to submit to testing is treated the same as a positive test.

All proposed changes meet the suggestion of the audit with one exception, noted Miles. The audit says to work with CMH's executive director, but the district prefers to work with the regional program coordinator, who is more aware of the local program.

Little pieces of the proposed changes are already in place. They were placed in standard

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operating procedures this year, which didn't exist in the program's first year in 2008-09.

The district is not operating against the existing policy. Miles pointed out the proposed testing for drugs and alcohol in every test and all tests sent to the lab will start happening when the revised policy goes into effect.

Miles also noted the other place for some further discussion is the extensive change proposed for the consequence for a first positive test. Students who potentially have a first positive this semester will face a greater consequence than what is proposed in the change next fall.

Further discussion was also raised on whether the policy really needs to state an audit is required every year.

Miles pointed out a committee to study the athletic/activities handbook has started meeting to update that document, as well.

2010-2011 calendar timeline presented

A timeline for preparation of the 2010-11 school calendar was presented at last week's board meeting.

Initially, administrative council will review two draft calendars Feb. 2. Then at the Feb. 16 adm. council meeting, the administrative team will agree on two calendars to make available for comment.

Calendars will be e-mailed to employees for comment Feb. 22. At March 5 building staff meetings, principals will allow time for discussion and to take comment on the draft calendars.

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Calendars will be presented and open for feedback at the March 10 JR/SR high accountability committee meeting and the March 16 elementary accountability meeting. Final recommendation will be made on one calendar at the March 16 ad council meeting.

A recommendation of a calendar will be presented and open for discussion during the superintendent's report at the March 16 school board meeting.

Approval of the 2010-11 school calendar will be made by majority vote at the April 6 board meeting.

Board retreat debriefed

Board president Dan Kafka reviewed the Jan. 9 board retreat, calling it a good session.

Five-year goal planning discussion was based on the five domains mimicked in the superintendent evaluation tool. They include instruction, student achievement, personnel, budget and facilities and community outreach.

Briefly, the board talked about policies which need upgraded and noted the complete policy package revision from Colorado Association of School Boards is probably too expensive for consideration.

Kafka was pleased with retreat discussion on budget timelines, which were adopted during last week's regular meeting. He said the retreat closed with reflections on where the district has been and where the board would like to see it go.

Other business

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In other business Jan. 19, the Re-1J board:

—reviewed the quarterly financial report. Supt. Miles cited at midpoint in the budget year, the district has 50 percent of the budget remaining. “This shows how closely the business department is watching this and shows how tight the budget is,” he added.

—approved first reading of the principal evaluation tool. It was noted parents were added in the communication line in the domain of change.

—accepted the resignation of JR/SR high custodian Olga Baeza, effective Jan. 22.

—hired Guadalupe Montes-Alvarez as JR/SR high custodian for the 2009-10 school year.

—approved Marcus Kammer as volunteer HS baseball coach for 2009-10.

—granted use of the new gym to National Honor Society for a dodge ball tournament April 30.

—designated the administration office as official posting location for board of education meeting notices.

—held a work session at the close of the meeting to review revised Section J board policies. Topics included: student withdrawal from school/dropouts, entrance age, parental consent, habitually disruptive students, weapons in school and physical examinations.

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Editor's Note: Three additional stories from the Jan. 19 Board of Education meeting may be found elsewhere in this edition of The Holyoke Enterprise.